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Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Managing works of art in the United Nations" (JIU/REP/92/7).

* A/48/50.

ANNEX

JIU/REP/92/7

Geneva, November 1992

MANAGING WORKS OF ART IN THE UNITED NATIONS

Prepared by

Andrzej T. Abraszewski
Richard V. Hennes

Joint Inspection Unit

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION ONE

THAT THE SECRETARY-GENERAL MAKE PROPOSALS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE FOR ADOPTION BY MEMBER STATES OF AN ARTS POLICY FOR THE UNITED NATIONS.

RECOMMENDATION TWO

THAT THE SECRETARY-GENERAL UNDERTAKE THE REORGANIZATION AND STRENGTHENING OF THE ARTS COMMITTEE, SPECIFYING ITS COMPOSITION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE, AND REPORT THEREON TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT AN EARLY DATE.

RECOMMENDATION THREE

THAT THE SECRETARY-GENERAL INFORM MEMBER STATES OF THE SPECIFIC AND DETAILED MEASURES HE PLANS TO TAKE TO DEVELOP, PRESERVE AND SAFEGUARD THE ARTS COLLECTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING HIS PROPOSED PROGRAMMES FOR REGISTRY, EVALUATION, CONSERVATION, INSURANCE AND PROTECTION.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR

THAT THE SECRETARY-GENERAL, IN THE INTEREST OF AN EFFECTIVE ARTS POLICY OVER THE LONG TERM, SHOULD ENGAGE A PROFESSIONAL CURATOR TO ASSURE THE RELEVANCE, COHERENCE AND VALUE OF THE UNITED NATIONS COLLECTION. THE CURATOR COULD BE APPOINTED ON A PART-TIME BASIS.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1 . A recurring theme in Fifth Committee discussions and resolutions and in the recent interchange of views with the ACABQ has been a perceived necessity to improve the focus of the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit and to establish a better mix between action-oriented proposals and substantiating research and scholarship.1/ As an experiment, Inspectors responsible for the present study have decided to eliminate large amounts of prepared background material and present instead only the problems as they see them and their consequent recommendations. The character of this report appears to lend itself particularly to this treatment because no source consulted by the Inspectors disagreed with the fundamental finding that something must be done to improve the management of works of art in the United Nations. Those interested in the background material will be able to consult the initial draft of the report (58 pages) in the files of the Joint Inspection Unit.

2 . At the outset of their work, the participating Inspectors had no special knowledge of the unique intricacies of arts management. In order to educate themselves most rapidly and efficiently they had the useful idea to take advantage of their national origins by consulting experts in Warsaw and Washington. This approach was highly successful - doors were opened and busy arts managers gave liberally of their time and expertise. This study could not have existed without their help. Accordingly, grateful acknowledgement is made to the authorities of the National Gallery in Washington, the National Museum in Warsaw and the curators of the collections of the Organization of American States and the U.S. Department of State.

1/ See resolution 45/237 of 21 December 1990, paragraph 2(c), (e).

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. Terminology and scope of the report

3 . For the purpose of this report, the term "works of art" is used to mean movable or non-movable artifacts such as paintings, sculptures, murals, vases, and mosaics, whose purpose is to make a visual impression, usually decorative. A number of objects of historical significance and value for the United Nations are also included in this study because of their uniqueness and symbolic significance.

4 . These artistic and historical objects share a need for special care, conservation and protection.

5 . The report concentrates on the management of works of art which serve decorational rather than utilitarian purposes. Objects directly used, like pieces of furniture, chandeliers, curtains, carpets and the like, are not central to this study.[2/]

6 . Inspectors recognize that many of the organizations of the United Nations system are concerned with the management of works of art. However, due to the action-oriented character of the present report, the Inspectors realized that it would detract from its immediate usefulness to try to cover the entire United Nations system in its scope. The Inspectors stand ready to pursue this subject further and to expand their study to cover other organizations if there is an expressed interest in their so doing.

2/ In view of the current difficult financial situation of the United Nations and its unfulfilled need for various furnishings and equipment, perhaps the generosity of Member States should be directed more toward utilitarian than decorative gifts. But such a process is outside the scope of this report.

7 . Therefore the current study deals with the United Nations, its Headquarters, its offices in Geneva and Vienna and the seats of the regional economic commissions. Because the restructuring of the United Nations is presently in flux, no recommendations have been made concerning the degree of centralization or decentralization of arts policy and arts management between United Nations Headquarters and its peripheral bodies. It is nevertheless an important managerial issue which needs to be addressed at an appropriate time.

B. Current situation regarding works of art in the United Nations

8 . In reporting on management and maintenance of United Nations premises to the 45th session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General stated the following:

> "22. Analogous to the need for a co-ordinated maintenance programme for the buildings is the need to develop an integrated professional programme for the protection and conservation of the collection of art works owned by the United Nations at its many locations. The collection is quite varied, ranging from classical Greek bronzes and Roman mosaics to modern abstract paintings and sculptures. Some of the works are mainly commemorative or are replicas of important ancient artifacts of symbolic significance as precursors to the goals and aspirations of the Organization, such as disarmament, peace and human rights. A number of the items illustrate the traditional artistry and craft skills of the donor country. Other works were commissioned specifically for the decoration of the United Nations building in which they are located. This collection has now reached a significant size and value monetarily, artistically and culturally, yet no adequate arrangement has been made for its systematic, professional control and conservation.
>
> 23. Specific decisions should be taken to redress that lapse. First, there is a need for an integrated registry of those works, with information concerning their characteristics, artistic origin, donor, control responsibility, assigned location, environmental requirements for conservation,

> existing condition and estimated current value. Second, there is a need to develop a programme of evaluation, conservation and protection..."[3/]

9 . Thus, the current problem has been precisely stated: management of works of art in the United Nations is presently inadequate. Gifts of Member States, private institutions and individuals are not being given proper care and attention. There is no coherent acquisition - de-acquisition policy, no vision to guide the purpose and direction of what has come to be a collection of considerable interest.

10 . Inspectors find no disagreement with the Secretary-General's description of the current situation and, accordingly, address themselves in the following chapter to their recommendations for its improvement.

3/ Document A/45/796 of 27 November 1990.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION ONE

THAT THE SECRETARY-GENERAL MAKE PROPOSALS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE FOR ADOPTION BY MEMBER STATES OF AN ARTS POLICY FOR THE UNITED NATIONS.

* * *

11 . Inspectors believe an arts policy for the United Nations should be adopted by Member States as the first step toward resolving current inadequacies in the management of works of art. Such a policy, backed by the authority of the General Assembly, can do the following:

(1) Create a context within which management actions can be taken with consistency and timeliness;

(2) Institutionalize the management of works of art so that action is not dependent, as it has been in the past, on the ability of dedicated United Nations officials to find time in their heavy schedules to devote to this task.

(3) Set professional standards for the acquisition and de-acquisition of works of art which will protect the United Nations against the receipt and retention of inappropriate gifts. Inappropriate gifts can be defined as those gifts which do not accord with an approved concept of collection and decoration, those gifts which are not based on artistic and cultural values or are not meaningfully related to the role of the United Nations or the various cultures of Member States, and those gifts which require excessive maintenance or otherwise unduly burden the United Nations budget.

RECOMMENDATION TWO

THAT THE SECRETARY-GENERAL UNDERTAKE THE REORGANIZATION AND STRENGTHENING OF THE ARTS COMMITTEE, SPECIFYING ITS COMPOSITION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE, AND REPORT THEREON TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT AN EARLY DATE.

* * *

12 . The cutting edge of an arts policy, once adopted, should be a strengthened Arts Committee, effectively insulated from political pressures.

13 . The present Arts Committee was established in 1950 as a Secretariat body to advise the Secretary-General on offers of gifts. At first a high-level body of nine distinguished members, it has over the years diminished to a membership of three. As best Inspectors could ascertain, the Arts Committee, and particularly former Under Secretary-General Brian Urquhart, contributed notably to the development of the arts collection. Unfortunately, however, the Committee's composition (principally Secretariat officials) did not evoke a sufficient aura of artistic expertise and its powers were merely advisory to the Secretary-General; thus, its ability to shield him from political pressures to accept unwanted or inappropriate gifts was unduly limited.

14 . Nevertheless, the internal terms of reference of the Arts Committee have much to commend them. The earliest version examined by Inspectors reads as follows:

> "1. Gifts will only be accepted from governments and not from non-governmental organizations and private donors. The only exception to this rule applies to works of art commissioned by the United Nations and designed for a special purpose.

2. Only one gift from each member nation will normally be accepted.

3. Gifts accepted should be works of high artistic merit or historical interest, or particular relevance to the work of the United Nations.

4. The works of art should be indigenous to the country sponsoring the gift.

5. Works of art which are recently created for, and are exhibited for, some other purpose, will not be considered appropriate.

6. Replicas of well-known works of art are generally not accepted. Originals are preferred.

7. In determining appropriate locations for display, the Committee will bear in mind that space for exhibiting works of art in the Headquarters building is limited, and that such works of art should be in harmony with the architectural environment. The Committee may decide to relocate existing works of art in order to find appropriate space for new gifts.

8. Installation and maintenance costs are to be borne by the donor."

15 . A more recent draft for a revised version of the Arts Committee's terms of reference, contained in a Secretariat internal memorandum of 28 February 1984, reveals two significant changes. Reference to the relocation of works of art was omitted (paragraph seven, last sentence), and reference to maintenance costs was deleted (paragraph eight). Inspectors believe these paragraphs should have been retained.

16 . In general, however, the terms of reference have stood the test of time. True, some of its provisions were not strictly carried out, especially paragraph one (gifts only from governments), paragraph two (only one gift per Member State), and paragraph six (anti-replicas).

17 . In the light of this experience, although Inspectors would have preferred the earliest version in its pristine form, they

recommend accepting as a point of departure the terms of reference set forth in the earliest version with clarifications in the arts policy of grounds for exceptions to paragraphs one, two and six.

18 . If the terms of reference are so endorsed, Inspectors also recommend that the Secretary-General decide between two options: either to retain the present advisory role of the Arts Committee or to delegate to the Committee the power to implement the terms of reference as the final authority.

19 . As for the composition of the Arts Committee, whether or not it is to be all-powerful in its sphere of competence, it should be heavily weighted in favor of artistic experts of recognized standing. If, as seems logical, the United Nations side should include appropriate representatives of the Office of General Services, of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and of the Department of Public Information, the experts should probably be five in number to assure a majority. As needed, the secretariat of the Arts Committee should be drawn from the Buildings Management Service, Office of General Services. The Chairman of the reorganized Arts Committee should continue to be appointed by the Secretary-General.

20 . With regard to the operational costs of the reorganized Arts Committee, the Inspectors are of the view that they should be minimal. Arts Committee meetings should be limited to one or two days per year. Most of the Committee's work could and should be carried out via correspondence.

RECOMMENDATION THREE

THAT THE SECRETARY-GENERAL INFORM MEMBER STATES OF THE SPECIFIC AND DETAILED MEASURES HE PLANS TO TAKE TO DEVELOP, PRESERVE AND SAFEGUARD THE ARTS COLLECTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING HIS PROPOSED PROGRAMMES FOR REGISTRY, EVALUATION, CONSERVATION, INSURANCE AND PROTECTION.

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21 . As previously stated, the Inspectors support the Secretary-General's position expressed in the report on management of United Nations premises, calling for an urgent development of professionally sound programmes of registry, monetary evaluation, conservation, insurance and protection of the Organization's works of art[4/].

Development of an integrated registry

22 . Professional and reliable registry of all works of art is the core of any well-organized arts management programme. As the above-quoted report puts it in paragraph 23:

> ..."there is a need for an integrated registry of those works (of art), with information concerning their characteristics, artistic origin, donor, control responsibility, assigned location, environmental requirements for conservation, existing condition and estimated current value."

23 . In developing such a registry, there is no need to start from scratch, since a good body of information exists, both in Headquarters and in other locations. Buildings Management Service

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4/ A/45/796 of 27 November 1990.

at Headquarters has a computerized "Report of Gifts Records by Gift Code", organized in alphabetical order of donors. There are also periodically updated information sheets listing gifts and donations. Similar information exists in Geneva and in other locations of the United Nations.

24 . However, the following data are not available: estimated value (either current or at the time of acceptance), environmental requirements for conservation, current condition and conservation needs. All those are elements necessary for a systematic and effective programme of conservation and insurance. They have therefore to be established, and professional expertise is needed to that end.

25 . All works of art accepted from now on should be registered according to the new programme which should also be applied over time and in a systematic manner to the existing collection.

26 . The registry should be established first at local levels and then combined to create a central registry of United Nations art. The master registry should continue to be located in the Office of General Services.

27 . An important issue is the categorization of gifts. Works of art which are part of a United Nations collection should enjoy a special protected status, while other gifts, whether of utilitarian character, or works of craft and artisanry, pieces of curiosity or memorabilia should be recorded and treated differently. A clear policy on the categorization of gifts and its proper reflection in the registry is important since it can help prevent converting the United Nations into a curio shop.

Establishment of a programme of evaluation, insurance, conservation and protection

28 . An integrated and reliable registry of works of art is prerequisite to rational and effective programmes of evaluation, insurance, conservation and protection. These programmes should be linked to the overall maintenance programme of the United Nations premises.

29 . Financial evaluation of works of art is not a priority issue per se, but should be treated in conjunction with proper insurance of works of art. As of now, there is no special insurance coverage for works of art; they are part of the general insurance of the United Nations premises. This situation should be changed at least in the case of the most valuable pieces of art. The reorganized Arts Committee should advise the Secretary-General on order of priority of insurance.

30 . It is expected that the evaluation at least of some pieces of art will be done by the insurance companies, although their findings should be reviewed by the Arts Committee.

31 . The programmes of conservation and protection are certainly more difficult and costly. They should be planned carefully, taking into account the most pressing needs in the area of conservation and the availability of funds. In the first instance the cost of the conservation programme should be borne by the donors. Failing that, efforts should be made to seek outside assistance and voluntary contributions to ease the financial burden of this programme.

32 . Arts experts consulted by the Inspectors confirmed the importance of a systematic and professional conservation programme.

Negligence or random conservation efforts could be very costly and fail to bring satisfactory results. Certainly, the United Nations collection constitutes an important asset of the Organization and it is in its best interest to protect the value of that collection.

33 . Integrated registry and inventory done on the spot should reveal the scope and urgency of conservation work. Putting together such a priority list, with cost estimates, will require expertise. Such a programme should be verified and approved by the Arts Committee.

34 . The acceptance of gifts by the Secretary General, which in the long term entails financial liability to the regular budget requires the approval of the General Assembly (Financial Rule 107.7) Typically the consent of the General Assembly was not sought, as donors were advised, especially from 1975, of their responsibility for long-term conservation.

35 . It appears to the Inspectors that there are two aspects of the issue of maintenance of United Nations art: the past, on one hand, and the present and future, on the other. As for the past, there is an inherited situation which it would be difficult to change. As for the present and the future, the cost of maintenance or conservation might be borne by the donors, as stipulated in the original terms of reference of the Arts Committee.

36 . In every future instance, donors should be asked whether they would be prepared to contribute in cash or in kind towards conservation expenses. Besides the obvious financial consideration, such an approach would be eminently reasonable in another aspect: since most gifts of art are indigenous to donor countries, they would seem to be best suited to provide proper

conservation service. There have been encouraging examples of successfully using such an approach in the past.[5/]

37 . The Inspectors suggest also the creation of a Trust Fund for Conservation of the United Nations Art Collection, open to all contributors. In the visitors area a special box for collection among the general public should be posted. Another option is to earmark for conservation expenses part of the price of an admission ticket to visit the United Nations premises.

5/ For example, Japan has repaired the "Peace Bell" by its own craftsmen, free of charge to the United Nations.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR

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38 . The Inspectors consulted a number of established cultural institutions and museums, like the National Gallery of Art in Washington, the art collection of the Organization of American States, and the National Museum in Warsaw. The common view was that problems of the United Nations collection were typical of every art collection and that, as a consequence, there was need for a curator who would take care of the collection on a continuing basis.

39 . Therefore, the Inspectors recommend in the long run interest of the United Nations that the Secretary-General engage a professional curator. He or she should be responsible for supervising the preservation and safety of the United Nations collection. Especially, the curator should be actively involved in establishing the list of priorities for repair and conservation. The curator should work closely with the Secretary of the Arts Committee, and be housed appropriately in the Office of General Services.

40 . Inspectors believe that a full-time position for a curator would not be required; rather, that a competent professional curator would be able to discharge the duties of this post on a part-time basis.